

The Apostle's Creed

Sunday School
October 15, 2023

Lesson Notes: WEEK 11

“He descended into hell” – Part Three

- There are **FOUR** main approaches/methods of thought toward the *“he descended into hell”* phrase of the Apostle's Creed:
 - ~~One~~, *“There isn't enough evidence”* view
 - ~~Two~~, Lutheran view
 - ~~Three~~, Catholic view
 - **Four**, Reformed/Presbyterian view

Main source text: Luke 23:44-49

- **Reformed/Presbyterian view:** This line in the Apostle's Creed is meant to be taken *“metaphorically”* or *“symbolically.”* It refers to the nature and depth of what Christ suffered on the Cross, having the weight of every sinner placed upon him and because of this spiritual weight, the world went dark for three hours. This line expresses the epitome of all our Lord's suffering in His atoning work as our substitute.
- Our **WCF, Large Catechism #50 asks:** *“In what did Christ's humiliation consist after His death? Answer: “It consisted in His being buried and continuing in the state of the dead, and under the power of death till the third day, which has been otherwise expressed in these words: “He descended into hell.”*
- **What exactly is the Reformed/Presbyterian view saying? Two things:**
 - **First**, God the Father obtained Christ's spirit during his death until the third day.
 - In verse 46 – *Christ gives his spirit to God the Father.*
 - Psalm 16:10.
 - 1 Corinthians 15:55-57.
 - **Second**, Christ did not make a literal descent into Hell, but “the grave”. At the time of his death, *Christ commended His spirit to His Father*, meaning since ALL his work was done, Christ would be more passive rather than active from His death until he rose from the grave. **As Martin Luther said**, *“Jesus Christ was the greatest sinner on the Cross the world had ever seen”* – and when he spoke, *“It is finished”* – we must BELIEVE and have **assurance** of Jesus' finished work instead of going, *“Yea, but he still needed to descend to Hell & do some things there...”*

- **In summary, the Reformed view** is broken down into **two thoughts** about “*he descended into hell*”:
 - **One**, “*Descending into hell*” was everything Jesus experienced on the Cross leading up to his death (thus, a reason why the earth went dark for three hours).
 - **Two**, Jesus’ spirit was separated from God the Father until the third day, where it remained in the ground in his body until Easter morning. To be separated from God and have your spirit in a dead body be “patiently waiting” for something to happen could be what many describe as HELL itself!
- The **Reformed** view is ONLY using **Scripture** as its source, thus, displays exemplary **humility**.
 - 1 Corinthians 2:1-5